

Fired Police Officials Wind Up With Cushy Jobs

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The Kremlin has developed a habit of announcing the dismissal of top police officers almost every week. The latest firing [occurred](#) last Friday.

But a closer look at the shakeups shows that some of those who lose privileged positions suddenly reappear in other plush jobs — just without the same fanfare.

Take for instance Nikolai Ovchinnikov, a two-star police general sacked by Medvedev from his powerful post as deputy interior minister in February 2010.

Only three months later, in May 2010, he was [appointed](#) as head of the All-Russia Institute to Raise the Qualifications of Interior Ministry Staff.

The February 2010 [shakeup](#) also cost Arkady Yedelev his job as deputy interior minister.

Yedelev, who rose in the ranks of the KGB and its successor, the Federal Security Service,

in Siberia, resurfaced only two months later as a deputy to Alexander Khloponin, Medvedev's then newly minted envoy to the North Caucasus Federal District.

But a failure to achieve a working relationship with Khloponin apparently [led](#) to Yedelev's ouster in April of this year.

It is unclear what the 59-year-old is up to now, but he is rumored to be in Chechnya.

The rotund three-star police general with a hard-line reputation reportedly formed a far better relationship with Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov. In December 2009, Yedelev traveled to Chechnya and presented Kadyrov with the shoulder straps of a two-star police lieutenant general.

The ousters of Yedelev and [Ovchinnikov](#) can be explained by Medvedev's desire to fill the Interior Ministry with people loyal to him. (They were replaced by two senior members of the Kremlin administration: Sergei Gerasimov and Sergei Bulavin.)

But the shakeup also raises questions about whether the Kremlin's current efforts to clean house in the country's notoriously corrupt police force will succeed.

"It all depends on an official's position in a clan. As long as he has broken no clan rules, he will be protected," said Vladimir Pribylovsky, an analyst with the Panorama think tank.

The February 2010 shakeup also included a top police official who was already behind bars when Medvedev signed the decree.

Buryatia's top police official, Viktor Syusyura, was arrested in October 2009, implying that he had led the East Siberian region for months from prison.

He stands accused of contraband charges along with his deputy Andrei Shurupov, who has claimed he was tortured in detention.

Syusyura's legal troubles stem back to 2006, when he headed the Interior Ministry's Azov-Black Sea transportation department. Investigators say he helped a group import goods from the Middle East without paying customs.

Syusyura has started fighting back — even though he is now in a Krasnodar region detention center.

Last week, Novaya Gazeta [published](#) an open letter from Syusyura in which he denied the charges as fabricated and accused two Lebanese businessmen living in Russia of running the scheme.

Syusyura also implicated Nikolai Simakov, his former deputy in the Krasnodar transportation police who is a deputy police chief for the North Caucasus Federal District, in the affair.

Syusyura claims that Simakov was fired from the post of deputy head of the Krasnodar transportation police in 2006 after an inspection initiated by him revealed that he had failed to respond for three years to the smugglers' activities at the Adler airport, which serves Sochi.

Syusyura is vague about the fact that he was Simakov's direct boss between 2003 and 2006, according to his biography published on his web site, syusyura.ru, and Simakov's official [biography](#).

Indeed, both officers were removed from Krasnodar in 2006, with Syusyura becoming Buryatia's police chief and Simakov becoming Chechnya's first deputy interior minister and head of the republic's criminal police.

In December 2008, Medvedev [relieved](#) Simakov from the Chechen Interior Ministry, but he soon [resurfaced](#) as head of the federal Interior Troops in Chechnya, a function that includes the position of deputy police chief for the North Caucasus Federal District.

Both the Interior Ministry and the North Caucasus Federal District police did not answer repeated calls for comment Monday.

Critics have long assailed the police reform as cosmetic — like the name change from "militia" to "politsia" — and argued that corruption will remain endemic as long as the top echelons aren't radically cleansed and wrongdoers prosecuted.

Medvedev has promised to reduce the number of Interior Ministry personnel from 1.2 million to 1 million while boosting salaries. Last week, he signed a bill that more than triples salaries from the current average of 10,000 rubles (\$360) per month.

The recent sackings of deputy ministers, especially First Deputy Minister Mikhail Sukhodolsky, who became St. Petersburg's police chief, have resulted in Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev being encircled by Medvedev loyalists, but Nurgaliyev himself remains firmly in place.

Some observers believe that Medvedev won't touch Nurgaliyev because he is Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's man. A career FSB officer, Nurgaliyev was appointed by then-President Putin in 2004.

But Alexei Mukhin, an analyst with the Center for Political Information, said Medvedev would not like to see Nurgaliyev weakened or even removed because he has proven the most loyal of ministers. "He has carried out every one of the president's orders. Why fire him?" he said.

He also said it has been a tradition since the tsarist era to shuttle officials between the provinces and Moscow.

But Pribylovsky, of Panorama, said Medvedev was increasingly recruiting replacements from the provinces in a sign of his limited support among the capital's elites.

"He can only hope that his appointees will become loyal Medvedev men," he said.

Ultimately, the police reform is bound to fail as long as the national and police leadership continue to protect each other instead of citizens, said Georgy Satarov, president of the Indem foundation, which tracks corruption.

"The police continue to see themselves as the protector of the state rather than of its people. In exchange, the state allows them to act in all sorts of illegal ways," he said by telephone. "As

long as this unwritten contract continues, there will be no real reform."

Meanwhile, it is unclear what has happened to Medvedev's first high-profile dismissal in the police force — Moscow police chief Vladimir Pronin, who was sacked in 2009 after a policeman killed two people during a supermarket shooting rampage.

Pronin reportedly went on to become an adviser to Deputy Mayor Vladimir Resin, who oversees construction. Last fall, national media reported that he would become a deputy director in Olimpstroï, the state corporation in charge of construction for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

But Olimpstroï spokeswoman Irina Kuznetsova said Monday that nobody with that name works or has worked for the company.

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